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ABSTRACT

Recent studies suggest that with more and more children in the United States being placed in day care centers, families are likely to become less powerful as agents of socialization. In this paper, eight value-laden areas of probable difference between staff members and parents concerning the process of child socialization are identified. These areas are discipline, sex role learning, aggressive behavior, racial tolerance, religion, self-direction versus conformity, academic emphasis, and sex education. Issues involved in these areas are briefly described and relevant research studies are cited when available. Recommendations for parents and day care workers are offered to encourage dialogue in these areas so as to increase the amount of consistency between homes and day care centers. Recommendations for further research in the area of parent/caregiver relationships are also suggested. (Author/MP)

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Values and childrearing in the home and day care center: Issues for the 1980's

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Abstract

With more and more children in the United States being placed in day care centers, it is likely that families will become less powerful as agents of socialization. In this paper, eight value-laden areas of socialization are examined (discipline, sex-role learning, aggressive behavior, racial tolerance, religion, conformity, academic emphasis, and sex education).

Recommendations for parents and day care workers are offered to encourage dialogue in these areas so as to increase the amount of consistency in childrearing between homes and day care centers.

At a recent parent meeting, I asked one of our mothers what she thought of day care. Her response was puzzling and ambivalent. She was grateful to have found a slot for her child in our well-staffed university sponsored center; but she commented sadly, "Johnny's first word was 'Donna'." Donna is the day care teacher's name.

Is this the first step down the road toward the loss of this day care parents' ability to function as the primary agent of socialization for her own child?

In a major review of literature on the effects of day care on children, Belsky and Steinberg (1978) arrived at two types of conclusions. First, they observed that in studies in which children enrolled in high-quality day care centers were contrasted with home-reared children on measures of intellectual, social, and emotional development, no major differences as a function of the childrearing environment were evident. Second, they noted that many other meaningful questions concerning the broader impact of day care on children and their families have not been asked. These unknowns in the day care equasion included the topics of the present paper: are socialization aims and practices (which are derived from the adults' values) consistent across home and day care environments? If not, how does this inconsistency influence the child's development? And, relatedly, are parents with children in day care as potent as agents of socialization as are parents rearing their children at home?

There have been very few studies addressed to these important issues.

A study by Elardo and Caldwell (1973) arose out of a debate among staff members of Little Rock's Kramer Project (Elardo and Caldwell, 1974). This was a federally funded attempt to offer day care in a public school setting, beginning with infants as young as six months of age. The project staff were primarily white and middle class; the clients were primarily black and poor.

Several staff members became concerned, after examining articles by Stroufe (1970) and Gray (1971), that they might be promoting a white, middle-class model of appropriate behavior, thus transmitting the cultural patterns of the dominant middle-class society, and they questioned the justifiability of such transmission to young children of other social and ethnic groups.

Other authorities at that point in time (the early 1970's) challenged the notion that child care centers were imposing alien values upon their clients (Bee, Streissgrith, Van Egeren, Leckie, & Nyman, 1971; Medinnus, 1970; and Levenstein, 1971). They believed, after questioning small groups of low income mothers with children enrolled in their early intervention programs, that differing social and racial groups were largely in harmony as far as their values regarding education and child care were concerned. For example, Levenstein reported that more than half of the 35 mothers in her program wanted their children to go to college, and Medinnus reported that his parents said that they valued reading, writing, and speaking clearly.

Both Horner (1977) and Fein and Clarke-Stewart (1973) assume this latter belief - that value consonance rather than dissonance is the more valid portrayal of the relationship between providers and consumers of day care. Fein and Clarke-Stewart refer to the work of Kohn (1959) in reaching their opinion that

"Evidence suggests that there is a common core of basic human values that all subcultural groups embrace. Happiness, honesty, consideration, obedience, dependability, manners, self control, popularity, neatness, and cleanliness are all valued to a greater or lesser extent in all social classes (Fein & Clarke-Stewart, 1973, p. 170)".

Butler (1973) asked the question "Early Childhood Education: supplement or threat to the home?" In her opinion, when an early childhood program is

based on values different from those of the home, a potential threat to the family can exit. The primary sources of such a conflict were said to lie in certain conflicting cultural values of social classes and religious groups to which teachers and families belong. It is often the case that within the home, the parent or parents have neither examined their own values and goals, nor those they hold for their child (Simon, Howe, & Kirachenbaum, 1972).

Gecas (1976) surveyed 210 families in the state of Washington and concluded that some parents find their socialization function a difficult one. Twenty-five percent of wives and 16 percent of husbands said that they frequently worried about their role as a socialization agent. Gecas found that husbands and wives frequently disagreed on how children should be taught, and on what methods were most suitable. This study highlighted the fact that parents often find that their own value conflicts are brought to the surface as they attempt to reach childrearing decisions.

Clarke-Stewart (1977) in a review of research on child care in the family, noted that there are differences in parents values and attitudes toward child care that are related to their membership in a cultural group. She pointed out that such differences are unfortunately not yet clearly articulated in the research literature on child development.

As the result of my experience as director of The University of Iowa's Early Childhood Education Center, which is a day care center in which children from infancy through age 5 attend for 10 hours a day, I have identified staff members and parents. These fall under the headings of: 1) DISCIPLINE, 2) SEX ROLE LEARNING, 3) AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR, 4) RACIAL TOLERANCE, 5) RELIGION, 6) SELF-DIRECTION VS. CONFORMITY, 7) ACADEMIC EMPHASIS, and 8) SEX EDUCATION.

I will now discuss each of these areas and describe the issues involved and cite relevant research when it is available.

AREAS OF LIKELY VALUE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN STAFF MEMBERS AND PARENTS

AREA	ISSUES	STUDIES
1. Discipline	What is the right amount of strictness or permissiveness? Is physical punishment to be used?	Research shows that parents' approaches to discipline are related to their social class. (Deutsch, 1973). Lower class parents more often rely on physical punishment and appeals to power, middle class parents more often rely on verbal reasoning and appeals to the child's sense of justice.
2. Sex Role Learning	With regard to value conflicts in the area of sex role learning, Hess and Croft (1972) offered the example of a teacher who separated two boys who were fighting with wooden blocks, sending one boy outside to play ball and another to the housekeeping corner. The latter boy's parents wanted to know why their son was told to play house with the girls - they weren't about to let anyone make a "sissy" of their son. What are the appropriate sex roles for young children to learn? Should boys be allowed to paint their fingernails and try on dresses? Should staff members encourage girls who do not play with trucks and other mechanical objects to do so?	
3. Aggressive Behavior	How much aggressive behavior should the staff allow?	One major finding of the Elardo and Caldwell (1973) study was that the predominately lower-class sample of parents believed that young children <u>should</u> be aggressive and fight at the Center, so that others would not think they were sissies or cowards. The staff did not agree.

4. Racial Tolerance	Should Center serve as a place to teach children to respect children of other racial backgrounds? What if certain parents say not to allow their child to play with others of a certain race?	
5. Religion	What position should Center take regarding the celebration of religious beliefs other than those represented by the parents?	
6. Conformity	How independent should children be encouraged to be?	Winetsky (1978) found that middle-class teachers and parents shared a high preference for self-direction on the part of young children, in contrast to the preferences of working-class parents whose behavioral expectations for children emphasized conformity. Rubenstein and Howes (1979) found that mothers were more restrictive than the child care staff.
7. Academic Emphasis	How much of an emphasis on structured, teacher-centered "lessons" should occur at a Center? Can there be too much "free play?" Child care workers may perceive their role differently than parents see them. Instead of being a structured, authority figure, child care workers often fuction as facilitators or "helpers."	Hess, Price, Dickson and Conroy (in press) found that mothers taught in a style that was more direct, demanding and explicit than did preschool teachers.
8. Sex Education	Should Centers have separate toilet facilities for boys and girls? Should sexual exploration be encouraged?	

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENTS AND STAFF MEMBERS

Clarke-Stewart (1977) concluded that child care center policies should reflect the cultural identities and values of the parents served, she believes that the implementation of this goal will be difficult. Operationally, what is implied? Clarke-Stewart stated that "this is not to suggest the specific programs or interventions be targeted to particular ethnic groups - that all Afro-American mothers be assigned to model 'A'; while all Greek-American mothers enroll in program 'B'." p. 81

She recommended that a sufficient variety of child care programs be available so parents may choose the arrangement that is most compatiable with their values. Butler (1973) recommended that parents and staff members work together with the child's welfare in mind. Concrete suggestions for resolving social or cultural differences were not offered, nor were examples of much differences mentioned.

Powell (1978) studied the interpersonal relationship between 212 parents and 89 caregivers in day care settings in Detroit, using a structured interview technique. His date revealed minimal attempts to coordinate day care children's socialization processes. Powell recommended: 1) that Center provide a specific area of the room for parent/caregiver interaction, 2) that caregiver be trained to work with adults as well as children, and 3) that the term "parent involvement" in day care include more emphasis on interpersonal relations among caregivers and parents.

MY RECOMMENDATION: Parents and staff should use my eight issues and anything they might want to add, as the basis for a meeting to discuss a united approach to childrearing, in which all parties - parents and caregivers, confront, discuss, and attempt to resolve any disagreements regarding childrearing.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCH

Research questions:

Needed are studies on -

- The effects of the parent/caregiver relationship on the development of the child.
- The determinates of parent/caregiver interaction.
- Children's perceptions of the rules of parents and caregivers.
- The degree of value conflict within and between various groups, and on which issues. Also what are the sources of differences between the socialization practices between parents and caregivers?
- What variations exist among various settings - preschools, day care centers, family day care home - with regard to their function as socialization settings?

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I believe that there is no area more important or in more critical need of investigation than that of values and childrearing in the home and day care center.

I hope the 1980's will not only see the wider availability of day care centers, but also a more systematic series of studies related to the issues raised in this paper.

Only then will we remedy our present lack of knowledge about the socialization of our children.

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